

WOMEN’S PERCEIVED HELPFULNESS OF POLICE AND SHELTER HOMES AND THEIR TOLERANCE TOWARDS MALE VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES

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Abstract

This study has examined the differential influence of women’s perceived helpfulness of police and shelter homes on their varying duration of tolerating male violence in families. Accordingly, the attempts of women victims for seeking help were considered as one of the coping strategies with intimate violence. Accordingly: i) women’s styles of coping with intimate partner violence may influence their initiatives for adopting formal and informal resources of help-seeking; and ii) women may have varying perceptions of helpfulness of help-seeking resources in terms of what works and what does not work for countering intimate violence. Data was collected by interviewing all the women victims of domestic violence (n=154) who were the residents of two shelter homes namely: *Dar-ul-Amaan*; and *Dastak* situated in Lahore City. The results of Chi-square test showed a significant association between the levels of women’s perceived helpfulness of police, and the duration of their tolerance towards male domestic violence. Varying level of women’s perceived

helpfulness of shelter homes had no significant influence on their changing duration of tolerating male domestic violence. However, of the respondents having varying level of perceived helpfulness of shelter homes a relative majority of them kept on tolerating male domestic violence for more than five years till getting refuge in shelter homes. It indicated that despite women differently perceived helpfulness of shelter homes they kept on bearing out the odds of male domestic violence for a longer period of time and preferred to stay with their abusers.

Keywords: Women's Perceived Helpfulness, Police, Shelter Homes, Tolerance towards Domestic Violence

1. Introduction

Prevalence of male violence against women in family is alarmingly high in Pakistani society (Oxfam International, 2004). It is also believed that incidents of domestic violence against women overwhelmingly go unreported. And, even the reported incidents of violence are not always brought into the notice of the law enforcement agencies at the first instance. In majority of the cases, women victims of violence keep on bearing the sufferings of domestic violence till the time they exhaust all the possible informal resources like parents, siblings, and heads of the family or tribe for seeking help (Bruschi, Paula & Bordin, 2006). They may be reluctant to immediately report the incidents of their violent victimization to the law enforcement agencies or getting refuge in shelter homes (Dejman, Ekblad, Forouzan, Baradaran-Eftekhari, & Malekafzali, 2008).. Perhaps, as a last resort they may complain to police or sue the court of law with or without getting support of any of the male members of their families. In addition, there is likelihood that the instances of domestic violence against women resulting in the form of severe physical injury or death of women may occasionally become public as a cognizable offence. Consequently, the law enforcement agencies like police may automatically involve in investigating such cases of domestic violence.

The question arises as to why frequent incidents of domestic violence against women go unreported to law enforcement agencies and why do women keep on tolerating the repeated episodes of violent conduct of their men for a longer period of time. Further, what causes their reluctance to reporting it to the state institutions like police and courts, or even getting refuge in shelter homes? This study attempted to explore the answers to these research questions. One of the likely explanations of this phenomenon might be the extent of women's

perceived helpfulness of state institutions like police, courts, and shelter homes that may influence their chances of reporting violent victimization to these state institutions. It may also indicate the extent of their tolerance to the sufferings of domestic violence at the hands of their male family members without reporting it to the state institutions. It has been, therefore, hypothesized that “lesser the women’s perceived helpfulness of the state institutions like police and shelter homes for protecting them against domestic violence; the greater the duration of their tolerance towards male violence against them in families.”

2. Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Explore the extent of women’s perceived helpfulness of the state institutions (police, and shelter homes) against domestic violence;
- ii. Measure the duration of women’s tolerance towards male violence in families; and,
- iii. Find out an association between the levels of women’s perceived helpfulness of the state institutions against domestic violence and the duration of their tolerance towards male violence against them in families.

3. Formulated Research Hypotheses

The researchers formulated two statistical hypotheses for testing an association (if any) of the level of women’s perceived helpfulness of police and shelter homes with the duration of their tolerance towards male domestic violence till reporting it to these state agencies in Pakistan. Accordingly, two hypotheses were formulated for testing an association of the level of women’s perceived helpfulness of police and shelter homes with their varying duration of tolerating male violence in families till reporting it to these agencies.

Hypothesis I

H0: There is no association between the level of women’s perceived helpfulness of police and the varying duration of tolerating it till reporting to police

H1: There is association between the level of women’s perceived helpfulness of police and the varying duration of tolerating it till reporting to police

Hypothesis II

H0: There is no association between the level of women’s perceived helpfulness of shelter homes and the varying duration of tolerating it till getting refuge in shelter homes

H1: There is association between the level of women's perceived helpfulness of shelter homes and the varying duration of tolerating it till getting refuge in shelter homes

The rationale for developing these research hypotheses has been based on the following propositions:

- i. Women victims of domestic violence are not homogeneous population with respect to accessing to the different state institutions like police and shelter homes for seeking help.
- ii. Women victims of domestic violence have varying perceptions about the helpfulness of the police and shelter homes for protecting them against domestic violence.
- iii. Women victims of domestic violence keep on using varying informal help-seeking resources before accessing to the formal help-seeking resources.
- iv. The duration of experimenting different informal help-seeking resources influences the extent of women's delay to utilizing the services of police, and shelter homes for protecting them against domestic violence.
- v. The extent of women's delay in reporting to police, and getting refuge in shelter homes for seeking help against domestic violence may be indicative of the duration of their tolerance to male domestic violence against them.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study has been conducted within theoretical framework of Shannon, Logan, Cole and Medley's (2006) study on help-seeking and coping strategies for intimate partner violence among women victims of domestic violence dwelling from rural and urban areas. They empirically examined women's use of various help-seeking resources, coping strategies to intimate violence and perceptions about helpfulness of these resources for them. Accordingly, the attempts of women victims for seeking help are one of the coping strategies with intimate violence. They argued that: i) women's styles of coping with intimate partner violence may influence their initiatives for adopting formal and informal resources of help-seeking; and ii) women may have varying perceptions of helpfulness of help-seeking resources in terms of what works and what does not work for countering intimate violence. They identified four types of factors that may differently influence women's help seeking behavior. These were:

- i. Contextual Factors
 - a. *Adherence to patriarchal ideas of male dominance*
 - b. *Geographical location of the women victims of domestic violence*
- ii. Help-Seeking Resources of Women Victims of Intimate Violence
- iii. Women's Perceptions of Helpfulness of Help-Seeking Resources
- iv. Types of Intimate Partner Violence

4.1 Contextual Factors Influencing Women's Help-seeking Behavior

Women's help-seeking was considered as context dependent. Broader social context like geographical area of residence may influence availability and accessibility of women to the helping sources of particular types. Similarly, cultural norms and values about gender and social class may encourage or discourage women from accessing to the different types of helping sources (Han, Chen, Hwang, & Wei, 2006). Even such contextual factors may also affect the extent of acceptability of violence as well as women's perceptions to define violent behavior of their partner as problematic or not. For example, women's ideas of considering intimate violence as their privacy related matter and their concerns for protecting their privacy may deter them approaching formal agencies for seeking help against their partners.

Adherence to patriarchal ideas of male dominance

Women might differently adhere to the conventional ideology of male dominance. They may believe that: i) as providers and protectors of the household, men have right to control the conduct of women; ii) they may be convinced that challenging men's authority over women is culturally condemned; iii) women are normally expected not to react to their abusive men by accepting violent behavior of men as a part of family life; iv) involving non-family agencies into the family affairs has been taken as violation of personal privacy related family issues that has been culturally undesirable and dishonoring family. Under the influence of these conventional patriarchal ideas women might be least pro to approach non-family resources/authorities for seeking help against their abusive male family members. Women's differential adherence to such conventional patriarchal ideas of male dominance may variably influence their help-seeking and coping strategies to their experiences of domestic violence.

Geographical location of the women victims of domestic violence

Women's rural and urban dwelling background and distance from the formal helping agencies like police, courts, shelter homes or even hospitals may also condition their help-seeking strategies against their abusive male family members. Women might be dependent on their family men for going outside the four walls of their house. In majority of the cases the housewives might have not hard cash in hand for meeting out the travelling expenses to access any of the helping resource. Resultantly, women living in rural and urban areas and the distance from the helping resources may variably influence their tolerance towards experiencing domestic violence. Jubert (2009) empirically found that seeking professional psychological help varied with differences of nationality of the students. It indicated that the geographical differences of residence influenced their help seeking behavior.

4.2 Help-Seeking Resources of Women Victims of Intimate Violence

The researchers identified formal and informal as two broad categories of help-seeking resources of women. Formal resource of help included police, victim advocate, lawyer, medical personnel, clergy, church, religious figure, women's shelter, support groups, marriage counselor, other professional, crisis line, drug/alcohol treatment and homeless shelter. Family and friends were categorized as informal resources of women for seeking help in case of experiencing violence at the hands of their intimate partners.

4.3 Women's Perceptions of Helpfulness of Help-Seeking Resources

It was argued that the types of women's perceptions about the chances of getting help from both the formal and informal resources may influence the extent of their actual utilization of these resources for countering intimate violence. Women's feelings that service providers particularly working in the formal agencies like police and shelter homes might not be unwilling, unsympathetic or ill-equipped might hinder their willingness to approach these agencies for seeking their help for counteracting their experiences of intimate violence. The types of women's positive or negative perceptions about the extent of likely helpfulness of both formal and informal resources may variably influence the utilization of the services of these resources to counter intimate partner violence.

4.4 Types of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence was conceptualized into four categories: psychological, physical, severe physical and sexual violence. Psychological violence included calling name, shouting, yelling, and treating women as an inferior by the male partner. Pushing, shoving, hitting were taken as physical violence whereas the male partner's acts of kicking, choking, threatening with or using weapon against women were included as severe physical violence. Sexual violence included threatening or forcing for sexual acts or intercourse. Women who experienced any of these violent acts at the hands of their partners were defined as the victims of intimate partner violence. It is assumed that more severe violent victimization may compel women to seek help from police or they may also leave their respective homes for getting refuge in shelter homes.

5. Theoretical Propositions

The empirical findings of the researchers led to derive propositions and hypothesis for developing a theoretical framework for conducting this study:

- i. Women victims of domestic violence were heterogeneous population with respect to their problems and need of help seeking; possessing knowledge of the help providing agencies, and perceptions about the potential helpfulness of and accessibility to those help providing agencies.
- ii. Help seeking strategies of women victims of domestic violence have been context dependent like cultural values and norms about gender and class, predominant religious institutions, attitudes towards acceptability of domestic violence, and geographical regions.
- iii. Contextual factors differently affect women's perceptions for defining partner's behaviors as problematic and acceptability of help seeking to counter domestic violence.
- iv. The differential perceptions of women victims of domestic violence about the helpfulness of the helping agencies may influence women's actual help-seeking behavior for countering intimate partner violence.
- v. Women belonging to rural and urban areas have different help-seeking resources, coping strategies, and perceptions of helpfulness of resources.

6. Methodology

All the women victims of domestic violence residents of two shelter homes namely: Dar-ul-Aman; and Dastak situated in Lahore City were the population of this study and out

of total 184 women residents only 154 could be interviewed for data collection. Mainly, the variables under study were categorized into six groups. These were:

- i. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents
- ii. Respondents' perceived helpfulness of police and shelter homes
- iii. Duration and reasons of experiencing domestic violence

More duration of experiencing domestic violence was awarded greater scores on three point Likert Scale for measuring the extent of women's tolerance towards domestic violence.

7. Finding

7.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Community-based empirical survey reports revealed varying prevalence level of domestic violence against women having varying rural/urban background, age group, marital status, relationships with the male abuser, and level of education. The data gathered for this study also included these variables for describing the socio-demographic profile of the women victims of domestic violence. Table 1 demonstrated that a little less than one-third (31.17%) of the respondents were urbanities as compared to 68.83% who belonged to rural households.

Table 1	Demographic Profile of the Respondents	(n=154)
Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents	f	%
Residential background		
Rural	106	68.83
Urban	48	31.17
Age (in years)		
19-30	85	55.19
31-40	48	31.16
41-55	21	13.63
Marital status		
Married	118	76.62
Unmarried	36	23.38
Relationship of abuser		
Husband	89	57.79

Father	19	12.33
Brother	17	11.04
In-laws	29	18.83
Level of education (years schooling)		
Illiterate	52	33.76
Up to10	83	53.90
10 to 14	19	12.34

A little more than half (55.19%) of them were young with an age group ranging from 19 to 30 years. A little less than one-third (31.16%) belonged to middle age group from 31-40 years as compared to the women respondents belonged to older age group of 41-55 years. Overall, a large majority of the respondents was almost young. Marital status had also been found one of the factors influencing the extent of victimization of women. The data showed that a little less than one-fourth (23.38%) of the respondent women victims of domestic violence were un-married and the remaining three fourth (76.62%) were married. On the whole, data demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of the women victims of domestic violence included in the sample size of this study were relatively young, married and belonged to rural areas. In an empirical study, Oladipo and Balogun (2010) found that age and marital status of women were differently associated with their spiritual help-seeking behavior.

7.2 Respondents' Perceived Helpfulness of Police and Shelter Homes

Perceived Helpfulness of Police

Women may be heterogeneous population with respect to their types of perceptions about the nature of treatment at the hands of the state functionaries like police and management of the shelter homes. Data presented in Table 2 showed that a simple majority (57.14%) of the respondent did not expect that police will treat them respectfully at all contrary to a little less than one fifth (18.83%) were convinced that they would respect them to a great extent. Almost one-fourth of the women could foresee that police could be respectful to them to some extent.

Women may also apprehend that police could not register their complaints against their abusers who belonged to their own family readily. Therefore, women were asked how

they perceived about the conduct of policemen for registering their complaint against their abusers belonging to their own family. The data demonstrated that exactly half (50.0%) of women did not foresee that police would register their complaint against their abusers without putting them in trouble. However, a little less than one-fourth (23.0%) of women respondents expected that police would register their complaint against their abusers without difficulty. Similarly, simple majority (51.30%) of women were of the view that police would not provide them protection from their abuser whereas one-third of them were convinced that police could be helpful to some extent in providing protection to them against their abusers. Women victims of domestic violence could be in need of shelter if they would prefer to get help from state agencies like police against their abusers. For this purpose, only one-fifth (20.13%) women victims of domestic violence were convinced to a great extent that police could facilitate them in getting shelter if they would prefer to go against their abusers belonging to their family.

Women complainants against their abusers might need some legal aid for suing the court of law. They might also not be able to afford the cost of their litigation for redressing their grievances against their abusers. In this respect, a significant majority (69.48%) of women did not foresee that police would provide them free legal aid for suing the court of law for getting protection against their abusers.

Women's Perceived Helpfulness of Shelter Homes

Normally, home has been considered a safe and respectful place of living for women. Women victims of domestic violence may think twice before leaving their home and seeking shelter from non-family agencies. They might be worried about their respectful and secure stay anywhere in shelter homes outside the home of their abusers. The data presented in Table 2 showed that women victims of domestic violence who were staying at the shelter homes found the functionaries of the shelter homes respectful to them to great extent (22.73%), to some extent (26.63%). But those who were of the view that the staff could not treat them respectfully at all were one half (50.65%) of the sample size of the study.

The length of the expected duration of stay at the shelter homes without facing any difficulty may also be one of the indicators of the extent of helpfulness of the shelter homes for the women victims of domestic violence. The data showed that relatively a majority (42.21%) of the respondents could foresee that shelter homes would provide them shelter without putting them in any difficulty as compared to a little more than one-third (34.42%) of

them who were convinced that they could face some level of difficulty for finding shelter in the shelter homes meant for women. Contrarily, a little less than one half (46.76%) of women could not expect their free stay for a longer period of time in the shelter homes. Given the same token, 40.26% of women did not expect that shelter homes would facilitate them for getting free legal aid for suing the court of law for seeking protection against their abusers.

Table 2. Extent of Women's Perceived Helpfulness of Police and Shelter Homes

(n=154)			
Perceived Helpfulness of Police in terms of	Great Extent	Some Extent	Not at all
Treating respectfully	29 (18.83%)	37 (24.03%)	88 (57.14%)
Registering complaint without difficulty	35 (23.00%)	42 (27.28%)	77 (50.00%)
Providing protection from abuser	23 (14.94%)	52 (33.77%)	79 (51.30%)
Facilitating for getting shelter	31 (20.13%)	49 (31.82%)	74 (48.06%)
Providing legal counsel for suing the court of law	19 (12.34%)	28 (18.19%)	107 (69.48%)
Perceived Helpfulness of Shelter Homes in terms of	Great Extent	Some Extent	Not at all
Treating respectfully	35 (22.73%)	41 (26.63%)	78 (50.65%)
Providing shelter with difficulty	65 (42.21%)	53 (34.42%)	36 (23.38%)
Giving free stay for longer period	39 (25.33%)	43 (27.93%)	72 (46.76%)
Providing protection from abuser	31 (20.13%)	56 (36.37%)	67 (43.51%)
Facilitating for getting free legal aid	43 (27.93%)	49 (31.82%)	62 (40.26%)

On the whole the data showed that almost a significant majority could hardly foresee both police and the management of the shelter homes could be helpful for them in terms of treating them respectfully, registering their complaints against the abusers, providing them protection from their abusers and facilitating them for getting free stay at shelter homes for longer period of times. Accordingly, it may be inferred that majority of the respondents had lower level of perceived helpfulness of the police and shelter homes for them.

7.3 Women's Duration and Reasons of Experiencing Domestic Violence

Experiencing domestic violence for a varying length of duration had been considered as one of the indicators of the extent of women's tolerance to it. Data presented in Table 3 revealed that almost half (49.35%) of the respondents experienced domestic violence for more than five years whereas a little less than one-third (30.52%) of them suffered at the hands of their male abusers for less than five years. Only one-fifth (20.13%) of the respondents reported their violence victimization during the current year of joining the shelter home. It was found that majority of the women bore the odds of domestic violence for a longer period of time.

Amongst the reasons causing domestic violence, an overwhelming majority (83.76%) of the respondents reported that the feelings of male dominance among their abusers and women's economic insecurity (66.23%) were some of the major reasons of domestic violence against them. However, unawareness of women about their rights (57.79%) and interference of their in-laws in their spousal relationships (59.09%) were also found significant reasons of domestic violence. Poverty (27.92%), lack of education (43.50%), and use of alcohol (31.16%) were reported as relatively as less significant reason causing domestic violence against women. It indicated that women's abject financial dependency and the nature of relationships of in-laws with women significantly contributed towards violent conduct of men with women while living with them in families.

Table 3 Duration and Reasons of Experiencing Domestic Violence (n=154)

Duration of experiencing domestic violence	F	%
Current year	31	20.13
Less than five year	47	30.52
More than five years	76	49.35
Reasons behind violence against women by men		
Male dominance	129	83.76
Economic insecurity of women	102	66.23
lack of education	67	43.50
Unawareness of women's rights	89	57.79
In-laws interference	91	59.09
Others (poverty and mental sickness)	43	27.92
Abuser used drugs or alcohol		
Yes	48	31.16
No	106	68.83

8. Conclusion

The results of Chi-square test showed a significant association between the levels of women's perceived helpfulness of police, and the duration of their tolerance towards male domestic violence. It means that with changing level of women's perceived helpfulness of police the duration of their tolerance towards domestic male violence also varies. The data showed that the respondents having low level of perceived helpfulness of police were relatively in a significant majority and they tolerated domestic violence for more than five years as compared to those who tolerated it for less than one year. On the other hand, of the respondents who had high level of perceived helpfulness of police and tolerated domestic violence for less than one year were almost double in numerical count as compared to those who had low level of perceived helpfulness of police and tolerated domestic violence for more than five years. On the whole, the data unveiled that with decreasing the level of women's perceived helpfulness of police to them, their duration of tolerating male domestic violence increased.

Varying level of women's perceived helpfulness of shelter homes had no significant influence on their changing duration of tolerating male domestic violence. However, the respondents having varying level of perceived helpfulness of shelter homes for them, relatively majority of them kept on tolerating male domestic violence for more than five years till getting refuge in shelter homes. It indicated that despite women differently perceived shelter homes helpful for them they kept on bearing out the odds of male domestic violence for a longer period of time and preferred to stay with their abusers at their home.

9. Limitations of Study

Data was collected from the women victims of domestic violence that could share the limitations of the agency data carrying the victims' perspective only. Further, findings derived from the relatively small sample size could not be generalized over the entire population of the women victims of violence for its policy implications.

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